

For more information, contact:

City Of Los Angeles
Department of Public Works
Bureau of Sanitation

Wastewater Engineering Services Division

Lateral Root Notification Program

2714 Media Center Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90065
(323) 342-1566

Email: sewer.root@lacity.org

**Or visit the Lateral Root Notification (LRN)
Program web site at:**

www.lasewers.org/sewers/roots

Other useful contact information:

Sewer Customer Service: (323) 342-6006

Sewer Odor Hotline: (866) 44-SEWER

Any Service: One Call to City Hall: 3-1-1

This brochure and related information
are available in **Spanish** upon request.
Please call: (323) 342-6248

Información y folleto sobre **Raíces en su
Alcantarilla** estan disponibles en Español.
Por favor llame al: (323) 342-6248



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what
can be done
to **fix** and
prevent

Roots
in your
sewer

City of Los Angeles
Department of Public Works
Bureau of Sanitation

The City of Los Angeles operates and maintains the **largest wastewater collection system** in the United States. This includes more than **6,600 miles** of public sewers over a 600-square mile service area serving a residential population of some four million. There are also roughly 11,000 miles of private laterals throughout the City.

Laterals are sewer pipes that carry wastewater from homes to the public sewer in the street.

Property owners own and are responsible for the proper operation and maintenance of their laterals that run from their property to the sewer in the street.

Why is it important to maintain laterals?

This brochure was delivered to your property because your property is located within a **root hot spot**. Private laterals in these areas are more susceptible to root intrusion if they are over 10 years old. Roots can damage laterals and cause them to collapse over time. It is important that homeowners properly maintain laterals to increase their useful life and avoid premature and costly replacement or repair. Maintaining laterals will also help minimize sewer overflow in streets and prevent sewage from backing up into buildings.

Tree roots in laterals can damage pipes and cause blockages. Roots can enter a pipe through cracks or loose joints. It is estimated that more than half of tree roots in the City's sewer system entered the system through defective private laterals.

The City maintains its sewers by: (1) routinely clearing sewers of roots using mechanical methods and chemical treatment; (2) systematically inspecting street sewers using Closed Circuit Television technology to identify structural defects; and (3) planning and implementing capital improvement projects to repair, rehabilitate or replace structurally deficient sewers.

It is important that property owners inspect, maintain, repair and/or replace private laterals to reduce sewer overflow and protect laterals from further damage.

What Causes Roots to Grow in Pipes?

Since roots are attracted to water vapor that escapes through cracks or loose joints in sewer pipes, they will grow towards and penetrate through cracks, loose joints or any openings in sewer pipes. This happens even in winter when trees appear to be dormant.

Once inside, roots continue to grow and fill the pipe to create a root mass that can become matted with grease, paper and other solid matter. This is what eventually causes a clogged sewer.

As roots continue to grow within a pipe, they begin to expand and exert pressure at their point of entry. This can result in a pipe rupture. A ruptured sewer pipe can be costly to fix or replace.

Signs that indicate a sewer is blocked include slow flowing drains, gurgling sounds from a toilet bowl, and wet areas around washing machine floor drains. A pipe that is not cleared will become completely blocked and may rupture.



Photo shows tree roots that grew into a sanitary sewer line, caused a blockage and broke the pipe.

Pipes Resistant to Root Penetration and Damage

Certain pipe material is more resistant to root intrusion than others. For example, Schedule 40 ABS and PVC pipes have tightly fitted joints that resist root intrusion.

Consider lateral pipes when planting or maintaining trees

It is a good idea for homeowners to know how their lateral pipes run across their property and connect to the street sewer. It is never a good idea to plant trees on top of, or adjacent to, a lateral. Certain tree species are more likely to grow extended roots and potentially damage pipes. Homeowners should consider the location of their lateral and consult a nursery or a professional arborist before planting any trees.

How to Prevent Tree Root Problems

The most common method to remove roots from sewer pipes is to use augers and saws augmented with commercial herbicides to kill roots and inhibit re-growth. Do not use products that contain copper sulfate and sodium hydroxide as they do not prevent re-growth and are harmful to oceans and other receiving waters.

A longer-term solution to prevent root growth in sewer pipes is to pump a mixture of water, an herbicide, and a foaming agent through the pipes. This mixture can be applied to pipes with severe root intrusion and is usually performed by a licensed plumber or contractor.

Homeowners should consult a plumber or sewer contractor before deciding which remedy to use. Companies that perform CCTV pipe inspection and root control can be found in the Yellow Pages under the heading **"Sewer"** or **"Plumbing"**. A list of bonded sewer contractors approved to work in the public right-of-way can be found at http://eng.lacity.org/spermits/common/dsp_contractors_list.cfm. It is always a good idea to get two or three quotes for any substantial work and to hire a licensed plumber or contractor.